



**NTSB**

# ***SAFETY ALERT***

National Transportation Safety Board

## **★ Hard Core Drinking Drivers**

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### ***Get habitual drinking drivers off the nation's highways***

#### ***The grim facts:***

- One alcohol-related death occurs in our country every 31 minutes, and one alcohol-related injury occurs every 2 minutes.
- Alcohol-related deaths in car crashes remain significantly higher than the all-time low in 1999.
- 17,013 people died in the United States from alcohol-related crashes in 2003.
- In 2003, people identified as "hard core drinking drivers" (those with a high blood alcohol concentration [BAC] levels [0.15 percent or greater] or who are repeat offenders with a drunk driving arrest or conviction in the past 10 years) were involved in almost 39 percent of the alcohol-related fatalities and more than 15 percent of the total highway deaths.
- Between 1983 and 2003, more than 170,000 people died in crashes involving hard core drinking drivers.
- Repeat offenders represent about one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of driving while intoxicated or driving under the influence of alcohol.

#### ***Effective actions to curb hard core drinking drivers:***

**These elements in the National Transportation Safety Board's model for an effective anti-drinking and driving program save lives:**

- Conduct frequent and statewide sobriety checkpoints.
- Implement programs for identifying individuals who drive on a suspended or revoked license.
- Define a repeat offender as anyone arrested or convicted of a DWI offense within 10 years of a prior arrest or conviction for DWI. One DWI arrest is indicative of a substance abuse problem.
- Impose tougher penalties for DWI offenders arrested with a BAC level of 0.15 percent or higher. The estimated relative fatality risk for drivers in single-vehicle crashes with a high BAC is 385 times that of a zero-BAC driver.
- Infants, until they are at least 20 lbs. and at least 1 year old, should be in a rear-facing child safety seat.
- Use administrative license revocation, which reduces involvement of adult drivers in fatal crashes by 13 percent to 19 percent.
- Prohibit plea bargaining. Alternatively, require that the original alcohol-related charge be listed in the court and motor vehicle licensing records.
- Prohibit diversion programs. Diverted offenders repeat their offense faster and often receive multiple diversions, despite legislated limits on the use of this measure.
- Establish individualized court-based sanction programs, such as DWI courts, with frequent offender contact, unannounced testing, mandatory assessment, treatment, and long-term follow-up.
- Use vehicle sanctions, such as license plate impoundment, ignition interlock devices, vehicle immobilization, vehicle impoundment, and vehicle forfeiture.

- Implement alternatives to jail confinement such as home detention with electronic monitoring; intensive supervision probation; or jail-treatment facilities, especially for multiple DWI offenders.
- Require DWI offenders to maintain a zero BAC level. Such measures have resulted in a 25 percent reduction of the proportion of repeat offenders involved in fatal crashes.

### ***What can you do to reduce drunk-driving deaths?***

- Use seat belts! Your best defense against a drinking driver is your seat belt.
- Talk or write to your State and local lawmakers and urge them to support the National Transportation Safety Board's recommendation.

### ***Need more information?***

Visit the NTSB Web site at [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).